

Message Text

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70

ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 117

INFO AMCONSUL KARACHI

AMCONSUL LAHORE

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 4403

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EAIR, PK, IN

SUBJECT: BACKWARD GLANCE AT HISTORY - THE 1971 IAC AIRPLANE

HIJACKING CASE

REF: A. ISLAMABAD A-14

B. LAHORE 546 (NOTAL)

1. PORTION OF GOP ARGUMENT IN DISPUTE WITH INDIA OVER
OUTSTANDING CASE BEFORE ICAO RELATES TO GOI BAN ON
PAK OVERFLIGHTS AS RESULT OF 1971 HIJACKING OF IAC
AIRPLANE IN LAHORE. GOP HAS CLAIMED THAT IT HAS NO
RESPONSIBILITY FOR IAC AIRCRAFT "GANGA" EPISODE
BECAUSE PRELIMINARY JUDICIAL INQUIRY IN LAHORE
DETERMINED THAT HIJACKING WAS ARRANGED BY "INDIAN
INTELLIGENCE AUTHORITIES." LAHORE REPORTS MOST
INTERESTING CONVERSATION OF CONSUL GENERAL SPENGLER
WITH LOCAL BUSINESSMAN, MUHAMMAD AKBAR KHAN, WHO CLAIMS
HIS NEPHEWS HELPED FINANCE THE HIJACKING OPERATION AND
WHO STILL FACE PROSECUTION IN PAK COURTS.

2. CONGEN SPENGLER REPORTS: QUOTE

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A. EXPRESSING LONG-TIME SPECIAL INTEREST IN CASE

(HAVING WORKED ON IT AS COUNTRY DIRECTOR NEA/PAF IN SPRING 1971), I ASKED AKBAR FOR HIS UNDERSTANDING OF THE FACTS. WITHOUT HESITATION HE RECOUNTED THAT AFFAIR HAD BEGUN WITH ESCAPE OF YOUNG KASHMIRI "LIBERATIONIST" FROM SRINAGAR PRISON WHERE HE HAD BEEN PUT FOR ALLEGED MURDER DURING 1965 PAK INFILTRATION OF OCCUPIED KASHMIR. (I MISSED NAME BUT CAN GET IT LATER -- CALL HIM M.) M HAD FLED TO PAKISTAN WHERE HE HAD FALLEN IN WITH OTHER KASHMIR "LIBERATION MOVEMENT" ACTIVISTS AROUND LAHORE.

B. AMONG SYMPATHIZERS WERE TWO OF AKBAR KHAN'S NEPHEWS (SISTER'S SONS), ONE A BUSINESSMAN IN LAHORE, OTHER IN KARACHI. INSPIRED BY INTERNATIONAL TERRORIST INCIDENTS, CONSPIRATORS CONCEIVED OF HIJACKING INDIAN AIRLINES PLANE FROM SRINAGAR TO DRAMATIZE KASHMIR LIBERATION CAUSE ("IF WOMEN CAN HIJACK PLANES ELSEWHERE, WHY CAN'T WE HERE?"). AKBAR KHAN'S NEPHEWS HAD SOMEHOW BEEN PERSUADED TO HELP BANKROLL THE OPERATION.

C. M HAD RECRUITED TWO YOUNG ACTIVISTS (AGAIN I MISSED NAMES BUT BOTH STARTED WITH "A") TO DO THE JOB, TRAINED THEM AND SENT THEM INTO INDIAN KASHMIR WHERE THEY SUCCEEDED IN HIJACKING INDIAN PLANE, USING PISTOL AND HAND GRENADE -- BOTH "DUMMY". THE REST WAS WELL REPORTED PUBLICLY, INCLUDING DESTRUCTION OF PLANE BY FIRE AT LAHORE AIRPORT, PUBLIC ACCLAIM OF A AND A AS NATIONAL HEROES, PERSONAL CONGRATULATIONS FROM ZULFIKAR ALI AND BEGUM BHUTTO (POLITICALLY WAITING ON SIDELINES) -- THEN SUDDEN ARREST BY GOP ON CHARGES OF COMPLICITY IN INDIAN-ENGINEERED PROVOCATION WHICH WOULD JUSTIFY INDIAN BAN ON PAK OVERFLIGHTS.

D. AKBAR KHAN CLAIMED THAT AS MANY AS 80 PERSONS HAD ORIGINALLY BEEN ARRESTED, MOST SUBSEQUENTLY RE-

LEASED (INCLUDING HIS NEPHEWS) THOUGH ONE OF TWO HIJACKERS STILL UNDER DETENTION. CASE AGAINST THEM IS STILL UNDER PROSECUTION. ACCUSATION AGAINST CONFIDENTIAL

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KARACHI NEPHEW IS THAT CERTAIN TELEGRAPHIC REMITTANCES FROM BUSINESS ASSOCIATES IN PESHAWAR ARE SUSPECTED (FALSELY) OF HAVING BEEN INDIAN GOVERNMENT PAYMENTS VIA KABUL AND TRIBAL TERRITORY.

E. I ASKED AKBAR KHAN WHY, IF STORY WERE TRUE, GOP WOULD WANT TO KEEP UP PRETENSE OF CRIMINAL CASE SO LONG. HE RETORTED THAT GOP KNOWS FACTS FULL WELL

BUT IS SEEKING TO MAINTAIN FICTION OF INDIAN PROVOCATION
TO EMBARRASS INDIA AND PREJUDICE GOI STAND ON OVERFLIGHT
BAN IN EYES OF WORLD, BY KEEPING CASE ALIVE IN ICAO.
IF GOP NOW DROPPED CHARGES AND CAME CLEAN, IT WOULD
WEAKEN BARGAINING POSITION WITH INDIANS IN CURRENT CIVIL
AVIATION NEGOTIATIONS. SO FALSELY ACCUSED ARE BEING
"VICTIMIZED" A WHILE LONGER. UNQUOTE.

3. EMBASSY FILES ON CASE HAVE BEEN RETURNED TO DEPART-
MENT OR DESTROYED AS PRECAUTIONARY MEASURE DURING
LAST INDO-PAK WAR. REPAIR ENCLOSED PRESS CLIPPINGS
ON CASE. ONLY CLIPPING REMAINING IN OUR FILES INDICATES
NAMES OF TWO HIJACKERS WERE MOHAMMAD HASHIM QURESHI
(AKA HASHIM) AND MOHAMMED ASHRAF QURESHI (AKA ASHRAF).
THE STORY REPORTED BY CG LAHORE SOUNDS MORE
PLAUSIBLE THAN JUDICIAL COMMISSION'S VERSION. IN
VIEW OF POTENTIAL EMBARRASSMENT TO GOP, EMBASSY
SUSPECTS THAT CASE AGAINST HIJACKERS MAY BE DROPPED
OR AT LEAST POSTPONED UNTIL AFTER GOI AND GOP AGREE
ON SETTLEMENT OF ICAO CASE.
BYROADE

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